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AUTHOR Muldoon, James P., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Over 60,000 secondary school and college students participate annually in the Model United Nations (UN) simulations in order to learn the complexities of international politics and to increase their understanding of other nations and cultural perspectives. This paper provides a broad overview of the Model UN program and its role in global understanding. Part 1 offers a historical chronology of the development of the model UN as a simulation of the UN system and explains the interaction of students who role play as ambassadors of the member UN states and debate, negotiate, and handle actual agendas currently under consideration in the UN. Part 2 includes a profile of the Model UN in terms of its conferences, its student participants, and the growing number of international delegates. Part 3 describes the role of the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) as: (1) national coordinator of Model UN activities; (2) convener of an annual seminar for conference leaders and Model UN teachers; and (3) the creator of the Model UN Network, which is the primary vehicle for transmitting ideas and information useful in the continuing development of the Model UN. (JHP)

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THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS IN BRIEF

by

James P. Muldoon, Jr., Director
Model U.N. & Youth Programs

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United Nations Association of the United
States of America
485 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

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United Nations Association of the United States of America
485 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 212-697-3232

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JAMES P. MULDOON, JR., DIRECTOR
MODEL U.N. & YOUTH PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) considers the Model United Nations an important educational tool for teachers and faculties beginning in junior high school through graduate school. Until now, UNA-USA has concentrated its work in the Model United Nations movement in North America. The work of UNA-USA and the many Model U.N. programs and conferences throughout the world have finally laid the kind of foundation which will allow the Model U.N. movement to reach out into new areas.

There are well over 60,000 high school and college students participating in Model U.N.s annually. For many students, the Model U.N. experience lasts for many years, participating year after year in conferences and role-playing several different member states of the U.N. The Model U.N. experience has a different value for each student. For some, the encounter will heighten their appreciation of the complexities of international politics, while for others, it will broaden their understanding of other nations and cultural perspectives. All will know the thrill of accomplishment and the common frustration of politics.

The Model U.N. experience is educational, but its value depends in large part on what the students put into the activity. A Model U.N. demands more than ever imagined of a student's interpersonal and intellectual skills, drawing out personal strengths and individual courage seldom seen in the traditional classroom. The more time and effort given to Model U.N. preparation the more valuable the simulation experience becomes. Unfortunately, no one can force the students to put more time into their preparation. Faculty advisors and Model U.N. groups will encounter students who will try to do the minimum and not take the Model U.N. process seriously. Yet, this problem is often isolated to only a few students in a delegation. Demanding the most of a student, using high standards as a guide, will serve as a useful method of extracting quality performances from your students. The Model U.N. experience demands nothing less than excellence, if it is to produce a significant educational benefit. In most instances, Model U.N.s generate higher levels of motivation for other subjects and educational activities in students who may appear less than interested in their education. Ultimately, the Model U.N. experience is self-motivating, bringing "self actualization" objectives in education to the fore.

This paper will give the reader a broad overview of the Model United Nations program. The Model U.N. is heartily endorsed by the two major teaching associations -- The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. To get involved in the program is quite simple. We encourage all teachers to participate in the program and organize a Model U.N. club in the school. The Model U.N. is one of the best global education tools in education today.

I. MODEL UNITED NATIONS:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It was the Roaring Twenties and a small group of Harvard students took it upon themselves to organize a Model League of Nations. It was the first simulation of an international organization. In so doing, they laid the foundation for the Model United Nations of today.

With the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, colleges and universities on the east coast organized Model U.N.s for their peers. These simulations enjoyed success throughout the post-World War II period. The Model U.N. started to spread to other parts of the United States slowly as students moved from the east coast to other regions. The Model U.N. experienced growth in the 1960s with the increased demand of students for experiential learning activities. More and more students were eager to participate in this "hands on" educational experience. Within the past eight years, Model U.N.s have literally spread like wildfire and the growth has continued unabated. High school and college Model U.N. conferences are now conducted in forty of the fifty states, as well as in Canada, Europe, and Egypt. On March 19, 1988 the first Model U.N. exchange program with the Soviet Union was launched with a visit of five Soviet students from the Moscow State Institute for International Relations taking part in Model U.N.s in Boston and New York.

The Model United Nations is a simulation of the United Nations system. High school and college students assume the roles of "ambassadors" to the United Nations and debate the current issues on the U.N.'s agenda. There are two basic elements of the Model U.N. First, students go through an intensive preparation process where they research the countries they will represent, organize positions, prepare policy papers, draft resolutions, and practice the rules of procedure and public speaking techniques. This process provides them with the information and skills for the second stage of the Model U.N. -- the conference.

The Model U.N. conference is the actual simulation. The students become the "ambassadors" of the member states to the U.N. and debate, negotiate and tackle the actual agenda topics currently being debated at the United Nations. This is where the preparation really pays off. In order to persuade other member states, the student "ambassador" must not only know thoroughly their assigned countries' positions and policies on the issues, but also exercise their persuasive writing and speaking abilities, exert their leadership and diplomatic qualities, and employ organizational skills. The experience gives the student an appreciation for the precious skills of caucusing, negotiation, consensus-building and compromise. Because the activity is exciting and unique, students not only learn about the United Nations, but also develop a global perspective and an appreciation for the dynamics of our interdependent world. The Model United Nations, because of its "learning by doing" approach, is recognized as one of the most effective global education programs available. The Model U.N. creates a forum where opinions and ideas can be explored fostering greater understanding and communication between people.

II. PROFILE OF THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Thousands of high schools and hundreds of colleges send delegations to participate in local, regional, national and international Model U.N. conferences in North America, Europe and Africa. There is growing interest in developing Model U.N.s in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Asia and Latin America. Today, the concentration of Model U.N. activities is in North America. With an active population of over 60,000 students, Model U.N. conferences range in size from less than 100 delegates to over 2,000 delegates. In addition, there are numerous classroom and "micro" Model U.N.s conducted in high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. and abroad.

A. THE MODEL U.N. CONFERENCE

Model U.N. conferences are organized on two educational levels. Approximately 75% of all Model U.N. conferences are organized by college students for high school students. The remainder are organized by college students for their peers. Model U.N. conferences are also divided into geographical groups. The vast majority of conferences are local and regional in scope. These conferences are concentrated in large metropolitan cities and in smaller communities where there are colleges and universities. There are only a few national conferences and these are predominantly situated on the east coast of the U.S. Each conference is an autonomous entity with minimal contact between them. They are loosely linked together through the Model United Nations Network and a quarterly newsletter which were initiated by UNA-USA to increase communication and coordination.

B. THE MODEL U.N. STUDENT

The participants in Model U.N.s are highly motivated students who return to their respective schools and campuses with greater interest in their studies and with a heightened drive to excel in the classroom. Model U.N. students have gone on to such high positions as Ambassadors, Members of the U.S. Congress, and a Judge on the International Court of Justice. Kenneth Adelman, former head of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Stephen M. Schwebel, the U.S. judge on the International Court of Justice, and Congressman Don Bonker, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, are just a few of the products of the Model U.N. program. Consistently, Model U.N.s attract many interested and talented students propelling them to leadership positions in all walks of life.

C. THE MODEL U.N. GOES INTERNATIONAL

The seeds for new Model U.N. programs all over the world are being planted. The Hague International Model United Nations has grown from a modest beginning twenty years ago to well over 2,000 high school delegates from throughout Europe and the U.S. The Model U.N. has spread to Egypt with a high school Model U.N.

conference entering its third year and growing each year. The Model U.N. exchange program launched this March by UNA-USA and the UNA of the Soviet Union introduced the Model U.N. concept to a core group of Soviet students. Five students from the Moscow State Institute for International Relations spent two weeks meeting with Model U.N. leaders and participating in a Model Security Council at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston and at the National Model United Nations conference in New York City. Alexander Shadrin, the leader of the Soviet Delegation, commented on the program to the Associated Press saying, "Those represented here will someday be officials, maybe diplomats, and this conference will help them understand each other better." This was the first time that Soviet students participated in American Model U.N.s. The five Soviet students are now preparing to launch Model U.N.s in the Soviet Union after their intensive two-week consultations with U.S. Model U.N. leaders.

In addition, other United Nations Associations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America are seeking assistance in getting Model U.N.s started in their countries. There are increasing demands spurred by the incredible growth of Model U.N. programs and activities for more services, training, materials and coordination.

III. THE ROLE OF UNA-USA

The growth of Model U.N.s in the 1960s and 1970s created a functional role for UNA-USA. The Model U.N. organizers and the burgeoning number of campus Model U.N. groups expressed a need for a focus and greater coordination of Model U.N. activities in the United States. To respond to the demands for materials, information and coordination in the Model U.N. movement, UNA-USA assumed the role of national coordinator of Model U.N. activities. In 1979, UNA-USA formally established the Model U.N. & Youth Department to handle the needs of a growing population of Model U.N. participants.

As the national Model U.N. coordinator, UNA-USA has been an advocate of the Model U.N. and produces the most comprehensive set of materials on Model United Nations. Publications include:

THE MODEL U.N. SURVIVAL KIT. The Kit includes: A Guide to Delegate Preparation, Issues Before the U.N. General Assembly, Basic Facts About the United Nations, and a pocket-size copy of the U.N. Charter. The Kit is used worldwide as a standard primary source for Model U.N. preparation.

CALENDAR OF MODEL U.N. CONFERENCES. This annual listing of all Model U.N. conferences registered with UNA-USA provides basic information on each conference and dates when they are held.

MODEL U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL KIT. This is a complete Security Council simulation that can be used in the classroom with brief country backgrounds for member states of the Council, rules of procedure, a scenario, and instructions on how to conduct the simulation.

NUMEROUS MODEL U.N. "HOW-TO" GUIDES. Brief outlines with succinct information for organizing Model U.N. clubs in high schools and colleges, for running a Model U.N. conference, and for writing background papers on Model U.N. topics.

UNA-USA for the past eight years has convened an annual Model U.N. Seminar for conference leaders and Model U.N. teachers. The Seminar brings together the leadership of the Model U.N. movement to review the basics of running a Model U.N. conference and program, and to address the major functional and substantive issues affecting Model U.N.s. Through the Seminar, UNA-USA has been able to present techniques and ideas on how to improve the quality of Model U.N.s, to coordinate Model U.N. activities, to increase Model U.N. participation, and to manage and train Model U.N. conference staffs. Between the Seminars, UNA-USA continues the dialogue with the leadership in the Model U.N. movement through the Model U.N. Network quarterly newsletter and regular visits of select Model U.N. conferences.

The Model United Nations Network was formally established in the Model U.N. & Youth Department in 1987, after years of spontaneous and loose ties among Model U.N. conferences and programs. A natural network of Model U.N. leaders has existed almost since the inception of Model U.N.s because many of the college students running Model U.N.s serve on various conferences' staff and attend several different Model U.N. conferences in the course of their involvement. The Network evolved into the more formal arrangement of today because of the heightened awareness of the benefits gained through increased communication. The Model U.N. Network has strengthened the ties between UNA-USA and the Model U.N. leaders and teachers. It is the primary vehicle to transmit ideas and information vital to the continued development of the Model U.N. movement. Through the Model U.N. & Youth Department, UNA-USA has been able to contribute to the growth of Model U.N.s.